

VZCZCXR08329  
PP RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHRB #0178/01 0581044  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 271044Z FEB 08  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8193  
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 4695  
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 0094  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 3148  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2295  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 0442  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3531  
RUEHLE/AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG PRIORITY 0110  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5920  
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 3666  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4941  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY 0271  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 9530  
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 3915  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000178

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT, INL, INR, NEA AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2018

TAGS: PTER ASEC PINS PINR MO

SUBJECT: GOM PROVIDES A/S WELCH WITH A MORE COHERENT  
PICTURE OF BELLIRAJ TERRORIST NETWORK

REF: A. CASABLANCA 0038 (NOTAL)

¶B. RABAT 0171 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 (b, c and d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 25, Director General for Studies and Documentation (DGED) Mohamed Yassine Mansouri gave NEA Assistant Secretary David Welch and his party a lengthy, comprehensive briefing on the Belliraj terrorist network. Mansouri explained the network's alleged revolutionary aims, criminal and terrorist connections, financing and money laundering, efforts to develop separate political and military wings, and arms smuggling. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Mansouri suggested beginning the three-hour meeting by discussing what has been happening in Morocco. Ambassador Welch welcomed the idea, saying he had received a lot of questions about it. Mansouri then spent the next hour explaining the development of the cell over the last 20 years, with his deputy, General Abdeljabbar Azzaoui, both translating and adding details.

IDEOLOGY

-----  
¶3. (S) Tracing the development of this unique cell and its links to movements the GOM thought had disappeared, Mansouri said that Abdelkader Belliraj was a Moroccan expatriate who had grown up in Belgium and became enchanted with the &Moroccan Islamic Movement8 and the Iranian Revolution. Belliraj traveled to Iran in the 1980s, reportedly subsequently meeting with Abu Nidal, Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, other Al-Qaeda leaders, Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Moroccan Islamic Fighting Group. He allegedly received some military training from Hezbollah in Lebanon. To curry favor with Abu Nidal and the Iranians, Belliraj allegedly assassinated six people in the 1970s and 1980s -- five Belgian Jews and a Saudi professor who opposed the fatwa issued after Salman Rushdie published &The Satanic Verses8 in 1988. Reportedly, they began to plan to

assassinate Moroccan Jews as far back as 1996.

**¶4.** (S) Mansouri stated that the terrorist and revolutionary leaders influenced Belliraj's ideology, which rejected Al-Qaeda's spectacular acts in favor of long-term destabilization. He believed that destabilization was the only viable avenue to power. To take power Belliraj and co-conspirators realized that they needed both political and military wings; so they developed the idea of using democracy as a front. In 1995, they created an Islamist political party, i.e., the &Civilization Alternative8 with links to Iranian Shi'a in Morocco and the &The Nation,8 an Islamist association that had been seeking party status until the cell was uncovered. According to Mansouri, the party and the association knew about the cell and its plans but did not inform the authorities.

**FUNDING: CRIME AND MONEY LAUNDERING**

**¶5.** (C) Belliraj acquired weapons and legitimate businesses through robberies in Belgium and Luxembourg, including the theft of USD 18 million from a 2000 Brinks robbery in the latter. Belliraj also masterminded the attempted, unsolved robbery of a branch of the BMCE bank in Morocco in 1994.

**WEAPONRY**

**¶6.** (C) The cell acquired relatively sophisticated weapons and smuggled them into Morocco relatively easily in the 1990s. The DGED believes that some of the weapons were destined for the GIA.

RABAT 00000178 002 OF 002

**IS ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED?**

**¶7.** (S) The GOM has now made 38 arrests, and the number continues to grow, although when Welch asked Mansouri if he thought the GOM had &all of them,8 Mansouri said, &Yes.8 All allegedly have some link to Belliraj and support his goal of destabilizing Morocco.

**COMMENT**

**¶8.** (C) Mansouri's explanation of this loose and dispersed network offers a possible picture of this complex network and plot that are unlike anything we have previously seen in Morocco. While many questions remain unanswered, the picture may be slowly coming into focus. END COMMENT.

**PARTICIPANTS**

<b>¶9.</b> (U) U.S.	Moroccan
NEA A/S C. David Welch	DGED Director General
Amb. Thomas T. Riley	Mohamed Yassine
DCM Robert P. Jackson	Mansouri
RAO Counselor George Gaydos	Gen. Abdeljabbar Azzaoui
Executive Assistant to	
DAPNSA Elliot Abrams	
Erin Yerger	
NEA Staff Assistant	
Kimberly Harrington	

**¶10.** (U) NEA A/S Welch has cleared this message.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>  
\*\*\*\*\*

Riley